

**For Immediate Release:**

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## **City to Close Watson Dog Park and Soccer Field**

### ***Fourth Community Meeting Set***

***San José*** — As of Friday, August 19, the dog park and all entrances to Watson Park will be closed by the City of San José. By Friday, August 26, construction of fencing around the full perimeter of the park will be completed and most of Watson Park will be fenced off from public use, including a second soccer field, and the basketball courts.

Two key areas of the 35-acre City park will remain open to the public over the course of a lengthy environmental investigation. These are the soccer bowl located north of Jackson Street and the community center building on North 22<sup>nd</sup> Street.

The additional closures and a status report on environmental studies will be discussed at a community meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, August 22, in the multi-purpose room of Empire Gardens Elementary School, 1060 East Empire Street.

“We are closing the dog park and the second soccer field as precautionary measures to protect the health of people and their pets,” said Sara Hensley, director of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services. “These actions are based on the latest lab results from soils testing within these two areas, and are consistent with the steps we’ve taken previously to protect public health in closing other park facilities.”

She explained that the levels of lead found during soils testing in the dog area and the second soccer field were found to be elevated, although no higher than those found in the other sites that have been closed previously. The other closed sites include two community gardens, a soccer field, and a playground. The basketball courts are not involved in the soils testing program, but will be closed due to access issues.

*[more]*

Within San José, pet owners have the following options for taking their dogs to areas that allow for on- or off-leash exercise:

- Ryland Dog Park (Ryland Street and North San Pedro Street)
- Hellyer Park Dog Run (Hellyer Avenue near Palisade Drive)
- Coyote Creek Parkway (from Hellyer Park to Anderson Park in Morgan Hill)
- Almaden Quicksilver County Park (McAbee Road near Whispering Pines)
- Fontana Dog Park (Golden Oak Way and McAbee Road)
- Miyuki Dog Park (Miyuki Drive near Santa Teresa Boulevard)
- Santa Teresa County Park (Bernal Road near Santa Teresa Boulevard)

Soil contamination at the park became apparent in 2004 during construction of a skate park facility. An initial environmental investigation confirmed the presence of heavy metals and other toxics that accumulated while the site was used as a dump site from 1913 to 1934. The City is hiring an environmental consulting firm to conduct a comprehensive environmental study over the next 12 to 18 months to determine the extent of contamination, assess public health risks, and evaluate potential mitigation measures. The intent is to determine the most appropriate actions for returning Watson Park and its varied facilities to safe use by the public.

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